

February 27, 1976

Obviously, as you pointed out, we are not going to be able to totally solve the habitat problem with this bill but it is a step, it is a positive step and you are absolutely right, Senator Lewis, there is no way we are going to be able to solve this very serious, serious problem we have in the state totally. But I think it is better to get the ball rolling and take a positive step at the volition of the sportsmen and I think we ought to do it.

SENATOR LEWIS: Thank you, Senator Dworak, for the answer to the question. Now, Mr. Chairman, I will attempt to close. First of all, let's learn what we are asking. We are asking for substantial increases in fees of hunters and fishermen. I don't object to that, Senator Syas, and I want that made very clear now. I do object, if we are telling the hunter and the fisherman and those others interested in habitat that this is going to make a significant difference because it is not. Again, if you look at the pink sheet on the impact of the bill, you will find that their figures are calculated on the basis of current fees and I would be willing to, wager is not legal, but I would bet one of the finest quality cigars I have got that there is certainly going to be some slippage in terms of numbers by the increase of the fees. But even if we accept those figures, 2.7 million dollars will do this for habitat development in this state. It will reclaim for that purpose three thousand acres state wide per year at the very best. That is an eighty about every two years in each county. Now, I said I don't object to the hunter's fee and I don't think the hunter does either but he is expecting that there is going to be some habitat out there and there is going to be a place to hunt and there is going to be all those things and it is not going to be there. He is going to be the one with a shock. Now what we have, we have a problem. We have a problem and nobody denies Senator Dworak's facts that three hundred thousand acres have been lost since 1973. The solution that you must come up with, and remember the Game Commission can come up with any solution they want to but the justification must come from you, is now how do we reclaim it. Senator Dworak says we use user fees and that is fine. Secondly, I think if the state has a serious commitment to this and we want to move with some degree of, at least, increased rapidness so at least we can reclaim six or seven, sixty to seventy thousand acres over a ten year period, we are going to have to make an investment from this state. I think it is only fair that we match dollar for dollar what is raised with the hunter user fees and the second thing that is important is that this money, this money will only be used for the acquisition and lease and in lieu of tax payment. That is all. Now, Senator Dworak has said that there is a good definition as to specifically pinning this down in the bill already. I invite you to read that definition. Management, easements, cooperation, public relations, et cetera. If this money is